

EDITORIALS & OPINIONS

The Bulletin
AN INDEPENDENT NEWSPAPER

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Oregon Legislature
needs a better way
to inform public

The 2022 legislative session doesn't officially start until February, but next week legislative committees will be meeting and talking about proposed bills.

Legislators may know some of what's coming. It's hard for the public to know much of anything, so far. For instance next Tuesday, one House committee is going to be talking about a proposal for broadband, cannabis, system development charges, assistance for live venues, workforce development and more. As of Friday morning, it's not clear who will be testifying or even what those bills are really about. You could argue that's fine. More details are typically posted before the meetings. Some committees have posted proposed bills and who will be testifying. And, well, the legislative session hasn't even started, yet. These are just preliminary discussions. It's always easy to come up with excuses and justifications. But if the state's elected leaders aimed to create a system designed to get input from Oregonians, this is not how they would do it. Proposed bills and full agendas would be posted far in advance to give the public a chance to understand what's coming and react. From what we can tell there are some interesting legislative concepts on the table. We will just sin-

gle out one. It aims to protect school superintendents. Last year, the Adrian School Board fired Superintendent Kevin Purnell because the board wanted him to defy the governor's mask mandate and he refused. The proposed bill says school boards may not direct superintendents from taking any action that conflicts with state or federal laws or policies. It also prevents schools boards from taking any employment action if a superintendent complies with such laws and policies. Maybe that bill is not one that will generate much public discussion. But when a bill is not posted well in advance, there is less chance that the public could have input. What we have with the Oregon Legislature is a system that allows public input, not one that is designed for it. It's designed now to serve only those who have the time and energy to refresh state websites every hour to see if clear information is posted. We don't expect that to change. Trickleing out information keeps the power in Salem in the hands of legislators and lobbyists and away from the public.

Historical editorials:
Where is consideration
for the taxpayer?

■ *Editor's note: These historical editorials originally appeared in the Feb. 22, 1907 edition of what was then called The Bend Bulletin.*

With Prineville getting a fine new \$45,000 court house, with Judge Bell's and all the county officer's salaries increased 100 per cent, with the assessed value of property doubled and taxes heavily increased, will someone please show us where the taxpayer comes in on this "efficient county management?"

...

The Rev. Homer says The Bulletin "has lost all sense of common decency and hence cannot do much harm." Present and former neighbors of Homer's say equally as fine things about him. "O wad some power the giftie gie us, To see oursel's as ithers see us; It wad frae monie a blunder free us, and foolish notion."

Editorials reflect the views of The Bulletin's editorial board, Publisher Heidi Wright, Editor Gerry O'Brien and Editorial Page Editor Richard Coe. They are written by Richard Coe.



My Nickel's Worth

Consider Starnes for governor

I'm writing to encourage your readers to consider Patrick Starnes as the next governor of Oregon. In 2018 Starnes ran for governor on a platform emphasizing campaign finance reform, which is essential to getting anything meaningful done in Congress. His lobbying efforts resulted in the Oregon Legislature putting Measure 107 on the ballot, an amendment to the Constitution authorizing the establishment of campaign finance limits (it passed with 78% voter approval), and though Speaker Tina Kotek failed to get those limits codified, the constitutional authority to do so is now in place. If Starnes is elected, he will ensure the job gets finished. He refuses to accept donations from political action committees and corporations and limits contributions to \$1,000. A cabinetmaker by trade, Patrick has a decade-long history of being elected to government agencies: As a school board member he worked to improve the quality of education for our kids; and as director of the Douglas County Soil and Conservation District he worked with diverse elements to craft policies that resulted in economic and environmental benefits. He has a demonstrated ability to work across party lines and find solutions. His platform, emphasizing campaign finance reform, universal health care, homelessness, wildfire response and recovery, solutions to climate change and more, is available on his website, and there are several good interviews in the "In the News" section. Patrick is committed to Oregon and familiar with issues that affect both urban and rural Oregonians. Please visit his website to learn more.

—Daniel Page, La Pine

Establishment tries to block Kristof

As a lifelong independent voter and a resident of this state I love for the past 20 years, I am appalled by the decision by the Secretary of State and the Democratic Party establishment to declare Nicholas Kristof ineligible to run for governor. While the decision is predictable and depressingly consistent with Oregon political maneuvering, it is

nonetheless disgusting. At this time, when the Republican Party has completely lost its way, Kristof's candidacy offers a breath of fresh air and the possibility of a revitalization of Oregon's political landscape. I have looked forward to finding out more of what he has planned for the state and deciding if, in fact, I want to support him. Now it seems that a few bureaucratically minded politicians in Salem are acting — out of fear I strongly suspect — to make that impossible. Shame on them! My point is simple: don't hide behind arcane rules to protect the establishment. Instead, find the courage to make an honest decision and let Oregon voters decide!

— Gary R. Olsen, Redmond

Check Adair's comment

I am responding to an article appearing in the Dec. 8 edition of The Bulletin. It described a discussion among the Deschutes County commissioners as to whether they should join Bend in signing a letter to apply for \$1 million in state funds to open a joint office of homelessness. I was surprised to see Commissioner Patti Adair's comment, "We truly have more people (homeless) coming here. I hear they are put on buses from Texas ... from Seattle. We are definitely a popular spot." I take this to mean some unknown persons/entities are putting the record number of homeless persons on buses and sending them to Bend. I am certain that an elected official would not make such a statement without having verified the truth of it. I am reminded of the Northern California town I lived in before I moved to Bend. Local rumor was that the increase in crime in the town was because some persons/entities were sending hardened criminal parolees to our town instead of sending them back to their home counties. We need to ask Commissioner Adair to please identify the unnamed in Texas and Seattle who are placing homeless on buses to Bend so we can hold them accountable. Should we be watching for these homeless-filled buses? Where is the bus stop?

— Dolores Ellis, Bend

Letters policy

We welcome your letters. Letters should be limited to one issue, contain no more than 250 words and include the writer's phone number and address for verification. We edit letters for brevity, grammar, taste and legal reasons. We reject poetry, personal attacks, form letters, letters submitted elsewhere and those appropriate for other sections of The Bulletin. Writers are limited to one letter or guest column every 30 days.

Guest columns

Your submissions should be between 550 and 650 words and must include the writer's phone number and address for verification. We edit submissions for brevity, grammar, taste and legal reasons. We reject those submitted elsewhere. Locally submitted columns alternate with national columnists and commentaries. Writers are limited to one letter or guest column every 30 days.

How to submit

Please address your submission to either My Nickel's Worth or Guest Column and mail, fax or email it to The Bulletin. Email submissions are preferred. Email: letters@bendbulletin.com Write: My Nickel's Worth/Guest Column P.O. Box 6020 Bend, OR 97708 Fax: 541-385-5804

Democrats: Revise the filibuster and reap the whirlwind again

BY HUGH HEWITT
Special to The Washington Post
If Majority Leader Chuck Schumer, D-N.Y., succeeds, against all odds, in altering Senate rules to amend or abolish the filibuster, he will quickly join Harry Reid from Nevada as among the best Democratic allies the Republican Party has ever had. Post columnist Marc A. Thiessen recently detailed Reid's greatest legacy — the confirmations of Justices Neil Gorsuch, Brett Kavanaugh and Amy Coney Barrett by simple Senate majorities. As Reid's gambit showed, the consequences of supported reforms can often be counterproductive. So it will be for Schumer's party if the leader's filibuster fix is allowed to succeed. The real winner in Schumer's gambit would most likely be Senate Minority Leader Mitch McConnell, R-Ky., who will use the new Schumer rule to enact a generation's worth of regulatory rollbacks and other reforms, just as he used the Reid rule to guide the Supreme Court to a 6-to-3 conservative majority. McConnell is the ultimate realist. He warned Reid in 2013 that weakening the filibuster would backfire on Democrats: "You will regret this, and you may regret this a lot sooner than you think." By most accounts, Schumer needs to be caught trying to alter the filibuster rule even though the votes for such a move do not exist. Sen. Joe Manchin, D-W.Va., continues to oppose changing the decades-old rule; and other Democrats are believed by some to stand behind him in private, grateful for his public courage. But if the filibuster is somehow revised or amended, the GOP majorities that look certain to emerge in both chambers after November will combine with whoever the GOP nominates in 2024 to create



Jabin Botsford/ The Washington Post
Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer, D-N.Y., aims to change the filibuster rules.

a unified field of Republican power in January 2025. Expect the new Republican president to use the new rules to move quickly to enact long-overdue reforms. First on my list would be a comprehensive measure that obliges school districts receiving federal funds to end public employee unions in schools. Teachers will holler and shout, but simple majority rule in the Senate will roll them. The disgust that has greeted the Chicago Teachers Union vote this week to defy the city's in-person learning order — and teachers unions' conduct during the pandemic generally — has not diminished the respect Americans have for the hard-working educator. But state "education associations," as teachers unions are often called, long ago overplayed

their hands. Extreme environmentalists already worry that long-overdue updates to the Endangered Species Act, the Clean Water Act and the Clean Air Act are coming, in part because those reforms will reduce their long-running accumulations of so-called stakeholder power in decisions far removed from conservation. If the country is to get moving again, amending these laws will be a critical first step. The filibuster has long protected these self-appointed guardians of water, air, land and sea. That could all change in 2025. Defense spending, entitlement reform and reductions in the federal workforce will all get a big lift in 2025 using simple majorities in both houses. Republican staffers should spend 2023 and 2024 drafting bills and telegraphing a new reform era, so it can be launched in January 2025. The goal: disempowering bureaucrats and interest groups. True, a new "simple majority" Congress will more prone to huge mood swings. But the accumulated power of Democratic special-interest groups, once dashed, will prove hard to recover. Schumer is risking it all. If Schumer succeeds, the GOP need not worry about the unconstitutional provisions of the "voting rights protection" bills now being bandied about. The 6-to-3 conservative Supreme Court created by Reid's folly a decade ago will strike them down, just as it will strike down a number of other laws in the current or future terms. Schumer should learn from Reid and remember: Mess with the filibuster at your peril.

■ Hugh Hewitt is a contributing columnist to The Washington Post. He is a political analyst for NBC, president of the Nixon Foundation and a professor of law at Chapman University Law School, where he has taught constitutional law since 1996.